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UN-HABITAT

Governing Council of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme

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Draft proceedings of the Governing Council of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme at its twenty-fifth session

I. Organization of the session (agenda items 1–4)

A. Opening of the session

1. The twenty-fifth session of the Governing Council of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) was opened at 9.15 a.m. on Friday, 17 April 2015, by Franz Marré (Germany), Rapporteur of the twenty-fourth session of the Council.

2. The Governing Council observed a minute of silence to pay tribute to the memories of those people who lost their lives in the terrorist attack on Garissa University College on 2 April 2015.

3. Opening statements were made by the Director General of the United Nations Office at Nairobi, Sahle-Work Zewde, who also read a statement on behalf of the Secretary-General; the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Achim Steiner; the Executive Director of UN-Habitat, Joan Clos; and the President of Kenya, Uhuru Kenyatta.

4. The Director General, in her statement, noted that 2015 was a year of significance for the United Nations: the third International Conference on Financing for Development would be held in Addis Ababa in July; the summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda in New York in September; the seventieth anniversary of the establishment of the United Nations in October; and the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Paris in December. UN-Habitat had a vital contribution to make to all those initiatives. The United Nations Office at Nairobi was playing a significant role in efforts to reform operations and increase efficiency. On 1 June, ahead of Headquarters in New York, the Office, UNEP and UN-Habitat would go live with the enterprise resource planning project, Umoja, which, by streamlining processes, would transform the way that the United Nations worked. In addition, a global service delivery model was being developed, a further cost-effective change that would build on Umoja, consolidating some administration functions in a single location. Nairobi was well placed to play a key role as the only duty station in the global South.

5. In his statement, the Executive Director of UNEP said that UNEP and UN-Habitat had a long history of working together, based on mutual recognition of the importance and interconnectedness of urban issues, *the environment and sustainable development.* To devise a collective and effective response to climate change, the international community needed to look towards cities. Although people from rural areas moved to urban areas to benefit from public services such as health care and education, the quality of life in cities was not always better owing to problems such as pollution, waste and poor transport links. Indeed, the unplanned, chaotic nature of some cities could have a negative effect on people's well-being and health, and even decrease life expectancy. In addition, public services could not cope with the rapid rate of growth of urban populations, which had led to spiralling costs.

6. He suggested that UN-Habitat and UNEP should work together to make the most of their complementary capacities and to maximize their resources with a view to responding better to the needs of member States and delivering as one United Nations. They should also work together to shape and inform the global agenda. The United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III), to be held in Quito in October 2016, would be an opportunity to change thinking on urbanization. UNEP had pledged $500,000 for the Conference, which was testament to its support for the activities of UN-Habitat and the close ties between the two organizations.

7. He said that the environmental dimension of urbanization had graduated from being merely a side thought to a key consideration. It was not simply a question of creating green spaces in urban areas; the idea was to ensure that people could live healthy lives in efficient cities that contributed to climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts rather than exacerbating greenhouse gas emissions. It was a momentous time for the urban agenda, for UN-Habitat and for the United Nations family as a whole, and UNEP was proud to rise to the challenge.

8. The Executive Director of UN-Habitat, in his statement, said that at Habitat III the participants would evaluate the evolution of the urban agenda since the first two conferences, held in Istanbul, Turkey, in 1996, and Vancouver, Canada, in 1976, in addition to considering the future of urbanization. The Millennium Development Goals had been a major breakthrough in uniting the international community and alleviated problems such as extreme poverty and lack of sanitation. In the context of the post-2015 development agenda and in the wake of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, however, new aspirations should be envisaged that would guarantee equity and prosperity for the world's population. It was hoped that a universal, legally binding agreement, essential for the Earth, would be reached at the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Conference on Climate Change. In that regard, the urban sector needed to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions, which currently accounted for some 70 per cent of total global emissions, while guaranteeing access to energy to those in the developing world. UN-Habitat was proposing new models of sustainable urban development and new ideas to combat climate change. He stressed the importance of optimism and of a visionary and strategic approach. Urbanization was a key source of development; positive outcomes such as prosperity must be balanced against negative externalities, such as traffic congestion and pollution.

9. He noted that, over the past 40 years, many Asian countries had become increasingly urbanized. Currently, however, it was the African continent that was undergoing a rapid process of urbanization. That many people were moving to cities in countries with a low per capita income was creating challenges and also spectacular possibilities for sustainable development. Historically, agriculture had preceded industrialization, which had been superseded by service industries and the knowledge economy. The future sustainable urban development of Africa relied on how the continent balanced agricultural development, industrialization and the emergence of a tertiary sector. Investment in the tertiary sector as the most dynamic sector of the economy could offer huge opportunities. An optimistic new vision was essential to capturing the positive aspects of urbanization and the paradigm change that, he suggested, would emerge in Africa. In conclusion, he expressed the hope that the international platform of UN-Habitat could contribute to a global agenda of sustainable urbanization based in Africa.

10. Mr. Kenyatta, in his statement, said that it was clear that sustainable development would occupy a significant place in the post-2015 development agenda and the sustainable development goals. When the United Nations had been established, 70 years previously, only 30 per cent of the world had been urbanized. The rate of urbanization had since exploded, in particular in the developing world, and it was estimated that the vast majority of the world's inhabitants would be living in urban areas by 2050. Ultimately, the cost of planned urban development was lower than the cost of unplanned development, which posed serious challenges such as crime and poor health. Noting that there were no hard boundaries between urban and rural spaces, he said that the poverty-reducing impact of urbanization was due to economic linkages between urban and rural areas: cities created a demand for products from rural areas, such as food and natural resources, while people living in cities sent remittances to rural areas. He described the theme of the session as timely and relevant, calling for the international community to recognize the aspirations of the billions of people in the global South who continued to live in rural areas and needed access to sanitation and other services. Noting that UN-Habitat should be visible, empowered and well resourced in order to be an effective partner for Governments, he said that his Government had pledged $1 million for Habitat III and for non-earmarked resources of the secretariat.

11. The text of the Secretary-General's message is reproduced in annex [ ] to the present proceedings.

12. Following the opening statements, the World Habitat Awards for 2014-2015 were presented. The first winner was the Y-Foundation, a Finnish organization that was playing a leading role in ending long-term homelessness in Finland. The second winner was a project entitled "Liter of light", which provided low-cost, environmentally friendly lighting using recycled plastic bottles.

B. Attendance

13. The following States members of the Governing Council were represented: [*To be completed*].

14. The following States not members of the Governing Council participated as observers: [*To be completed*].

15. The following United Nations bodies and specialized agencies were represented: [*To be completed*].

16. Representatives of the following intergovernmental organizations also attended: [*To be completed*].

17. A full list of those attending the session may be found in the list of participants, which is available under the symbol HSP/GC/25/INF/[ ].

C. Election of officers

18. At its 1st plenary meeting, on the morning of Friday, 17 April 2015, the Governing Council elected the following officers for the session:

President:

Mr. Ján Ilavský (Slovakia)

Vice-Presidents:

Mr. Franz Marré (Germany)

Mr. Nii Lantey Vanderpuye (Ghana)

Ms. Nandita Chatterjee (India)

Rapporteur:

Mr. Fernando Lugris (Uruguay)

D. Credentials

19. In pursuance of rule 16, paragraph 2, of the rules of procedure of the Governing Council, the Bureau reported to the Council at its 5th plenary meeting, on the morning of Tuesday, 21 April 2015, that it had examined the credentials submitted by delegations attending the twenty-fifth session of the Council and had found them to be in order. The Council approved the report of the Bureau on credentials at the same meeting.

E. Adoption of the agenda

20. At its 1st plenary meeting, on the morning of Friday, 17 April 2015, the Governing Council had before it documents HSP/GC/25/1 and Add.1. In addition, the President recalled that the Executive Director had written to the members of the Council on 14 April to request that an additional item, on an amendment to rule 19 of the rules of procedure, be included in the agenda.

21. In the light of the request of the Executive Director, the Governing Council adopted the following agenda for its twenty-fifth session:

1. Opening of the session.
2. Election of officers.
3. Credentials.
4. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work.
5. Activities of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, including coordination matters.
6. Dialogue on the special theme for the twenty-fifth session of the Governing Council.

7. Work programme of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme and budget of the United Nations Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation for the biennium 2016–2017.

8. Provisional agenda and other arrangements for the twenty-sixth session of the Governing Council.

9. Amendment to the rules of procedure of the Governing Council.

10. Other matters.

11. Adoption of the report of the session.

12. Closure of the session.

F. Organization of work

22. At its 1st plenary meeting, on the morning of Friday, 17 April 2015, the Governing Council established a sessional committee of the whole, to which it allocated agenda items 5, 7 and 8. The Council would consider item 6 and issues arising under items 5, 7 and other items during the plenary meetings of the Council.

23. The work of the plenary meetings for the first three days of the session was divided into two segments: a high-level segment, featuring general debate by ministers and other high-level representatives, would be held on the first and second days and a dialogue of Governments with local authorities and other partners on the special theme of the session would be held on the third day.

24. The Governing Council also established a drafting committee to consider the draft resolutions submitted to the Council. It was agreed that the draft resolutions recommended by the Committee of Permanent Representatives would first be considered by the Committee of the Whole, which would submit them to the drafting committee for further consideration, and that, following their consideration by the drafting committee, they would be submitted to the Council through the Committee for possible adoption at a plenary meeting.

25. The Governing Council also established a working group, chaired by Michal Mlynar (Slovakia), to review the proposed amendment to rule 19 of the rules of procedure of the Council and report to the Council during the session.

26. In considering the agenda items, the Governing Council had before it the documents listed for each item in the annotations to the agenda for the session (HSP/GC/25/1/Add.1).

G. Policy statement by the Executive Director

27. In presenting his policy statement, the Executive Director outlined the current strategic direction of the work of UN-Habitat. At its core, he said, was a new vision of the role of urbanization in sustainable development. Not simply a demographic phenomenon, urbanization, as an engine rather than an outcome of development, had the potential to help the world to overcome many significant challenges; Governments had recognized the opportunities offered by urbanization in the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development. That strategic direction was based on a view of urbanization as a way of life and recognized the multiple benefits of planned urbanization. Policy, planning and design could harness urbanization to contribute to the economic, social and environmental pillars of sustainable development.

28. In the past 50 years, many urban initiatives had been underpinned by the international model of urbanization. Notwithstanding its widely understood economic benefits, with cities accounting for some 70 per cent of global gross domestic product, that model had not adequately responded to social and environmental challenges. Although some progress had been made in tackling poverty, inequality was increasing in cities, which, in addition, contributed up to 70 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions. It was not a sustainable model. The new urban agenda, envisaged as an outcome of Habitat III, must therefore address all three pillars of sustainable development, promoting the economic role of cities while tackling social and environmental problems.

29. UN-Habitat had recently adopted a more strategic and integrated approach, building on its new vision within the framework of the strategic plan for 2014–2019. Outlining the many positive outcomes, he highlighted the contrast with previous more sectoral and fragmented approaches that had focused predominantly on symptoms. The new approach was based on two premises: that there was a positive correlation between urbanization and development and that the quality and quantity of urban output were related to the quality and characteristics of urbanization. A three-pronged approach had been adopted that laid emphasis on the first three focus areas of the strategic plan: urban legislation,

land and governance; urban planning and design; and urban economy and municipal finance. A fourth focus area, urban basic services, had also been prioritized.

30. With regard to housing, UN-Habitat was pursuing the right to adequate housing for all through a strategic approach that put housing at the centre of the city. With regard to risk reduction strategies, the improvement of the urban fabric, including the provision of a common public space as a fundamental priority, was also being accelerated as the most effective course of action. Approaches such as building back better would enable UN-Habitat to contribute to the implementation of the recently adopted Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030. Highlighting the exclusion of women from the benefits of urbanization and the challenge posed by increasing youth unemployment, he noted that gender and youth were important cross-cutting issues in the work of UN-Habitat, outlining several initiatives in that regard.

31. A key tool in the implementation of the UN-Habitat approach at the country level was the Habitat country programme document, which was aimed at strengthening national ownership and linked to both the country's United Nations Development Assistance Framework and its national development plan. UN-Habitat had also focused on the prevention and resolution of land conflicts through its Global Land Tool Network.

32. Elaborating on the new urban agenda, he stressed its potential as a vision representing a paradigm shift in line with the sustainable development goals and, in particular, proposed goal 11, "Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable". The agenda, sharing the principles of the post-2015 development agenda, should promote environmentally resilient, safe and socially inclusive, economically productive cities and have the capability of being implemented at various scales and in diverse contexts. For urbanization to be transformative, three areas needed to be at the core of the agenda: the strengthening of urban legislation and governance; the development and implementation of national urban policies and reinvigoration of planning and design; and the harnessing of the urban economy, including the strengthening of municipal finance. Concerted efforts would have far-reaching benefits such as increasing economic productivity, enhancing equitable growth, improving accountability and creating multiplier effects. UN-Habitat had participated in and provided input to the development of the goals, given that, as the first global United Nations conference to be held after the adoption of the sustainable development goals, Habitat III must resonate with the spirit of the post-2015 development agenda.

33. In conclusion, he emphasized that UN-Habitat had continued to contribute to the new urban agenda and to promote recognition of the significant contributions of urbanization to sustainable development, to tackling climate change and to the global social agenda. UN-Habitat needed the strong support of member States, in particular through increased non-earmarked contributions. He noted that, while urbanization posed a major challenge, every challenge gave way to a new opportunity.

H. Work of the Committee of the Whole (agenda items 5, 7 and 8)

34. The Committee of the Whole established by the Governing Council at its 1st plenary meeting was chaired by Nii Lantey Vanderpuye (Ghana), one of the three Vice-Presidents of the Council. It held [ ] meetings between 17 and [ ] April. At its 1st meeting, on the afternoon of Friday, 17 April 2015, the Chair informed the Committee that it would consider agenda items 5, 7 and 8.

35. [*To be completed*]

I. Work of the drafting committee and adoption of resolutions (agenda items 5, 7 and 8)

36. The drafting committee held [ ] meetings during the session and reached agreement by consensus on [ ] draft resolutions.

37. [*To be completed*]

III. High-level segment and dialogue on the special theme for the twenty-fifth session of the Governing Council (agenda items 5–7)

A. High-level segment

38. The Governing Council took up agenda items 5–7 at its 2nd plenary meeting, on the afternoon on Friday, 17 April 2015, at which time it began the high-level general debate on those items. The general debate continued at its 3rd and 4th meetings, on Monday, 20 April 2015.

39. There was general agreement that rapid urbanization, especially in developing countries, presented enormous challenges to sustainable development. There was also widespread agreement that, through integrated planning of human settlements across the rural-urban settlement continuum, urbanization could be a transformative instrument for achieving sustainable social and economic development. One representative, however, pointed out that countries with a small land mass needed to balance carefully the benefits of urbanization against the potential negative impact of the irreversible loss of agricultural land.

40. A number of representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that multisectoral, multi-stakeholder approaches were required to achieve sustainable urban development and human settlements, with a few emphasizing the importance of involving local communities in spatial planning. A number also said that the UN-Habitat draft international guidelines on urban and territorial planning could serve as a universal framework to guide planning processes.

41. Several representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that it was essential for human settlement plans to address disaster risk reduction and management, with two offering to share the expertise of their countries in the prevention of and early response to climate-related disasters. A number of representatives called for greater attention to be paid to urban regeneration. Several expressed concern regarding the consequences of climate change, with one commenting on the key role that cities could play in efforts to combat the problem.

42. There was general agreement by representatives, including several speaking on behalf of groups of countries, that it was important to strengthen the links between urban and rural areas and between national and local authorities, with two suggesting that well-managed urban-rural partnerships could help to make metropolitan areas more sustainable, limit urban sprawl and prevent rural-to-urban migration. One underlined the symbiosis between rural and urban communities and another called for more consideration of the needs of rural populations, for example by focusing to a greater extent on smaller towns that provided services for rural areas.

43. Several representatives described measures taken by their countries to achieve more balanced development between regions and between rural and urban areas; such measures included the provision of basic services, high-quality infrastructure and non-farm job opportunities in rural areas; the provision of logistical services to rural areas adjacent to cities to enable their integration into local and international supply chains; the development of rural-urban public transport systems; improvements in energy and water efficiency; significant funding for international-level projects relating to urban development; and the building of road, rail and port infrastructure to attract industry to regions lagging behind. Another representative shared his country's experience with a new urbanization model that, among other things, was intended to facilitate the integration of rural migrants into cities and improve the standard of living of both urban and rural dwellers. A few representatives emphasized that the benefits of urbanization and economic growth should be distributed equitably among the population.

44. Several representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that inequality remained the greatest challenge to sustainable urban development. To tackle that challenge, it was essential for sustainable development policies to accord priority to affordable housing, infrastructure and slum upgrading and for national urban policies to be designed to ensure that public investments benefited all city dwellers and promoted social inclusion and the right to the city. A number of representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, called for continued efforts to provide adequate, affordable, environmentally sustainable and resilient housing for urban and rural dwellers in the context of the new urban agenda. Others called for the integration of gender and human rights issues into urban plans and underlined that there was a need to encourage greater participation of young people. The importance of education as a means of improving the lives of slum dwellers was also highlighted. Several representatives expressed appreciation for UN-Habitat initiatives to upgrade informal settlements, with three calling for Africa to be at the forefront of the new urban agenda.

45. One representative called for a strengthened commitment to capacity-building and a better mechanism for technology transfer between development partners as part of a reinvigorated global partnership. Partnerships were also noted as important at the national level, with several representatives referring to public-private partnerships as a way for some Governments to act as facilitators rather than as sole providers of housing.

46. One representative stressed that migrants had a valuable role to play in the urbanization agenda and emphasized that the needs of mobile populations should be taken into account when formulating urbanization policy.

47. Many representatives expressed appreciation for the contribution of UN-Habitat to the post-2015 development agenda and urged that a similar contribution be made to the preparations for Habitat III. There was widespread support for the stand-alone goal on cities and human settlements (goal 11) and related targets proposed by the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals, which one representative said would help to tackle urbanization challenges throughout the settlement continuum. One representative suggested that there was a need to discuss potential governance arrangements for subnational activities associated with the implementation of goal 11. Another noted that the current session provided a valuable opportunity to make a bridge between the Millennium Development Goals and the sustainable development goals.

48. It was widely agreed that, to enable UN-Habitat effectively to deliver on its mandate in the context of the post-2015 development agenda and the ambitious new urban agenda, it was essential for the Governing Council to agree at the current session upon a package to strengthen the governance of UN-Habitat. Such a reform was needed to make UN-Habitat more effective, efficient, transparent and responsive to its member States, and to ensure more effective oversight of the Programme. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that increased oversight should not create additional costs or unnecessary bureaucracy.

49. Many representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, expressed concern about the continued challenges faced by UN-Habitat with regard to its core budget, calling upon the Executive Director to step up efforts to mobilize resources and widen the donor base of the Programme, including by raising awareness of its activities and the impact of its work through, among other things, the use of social media. A few representatives welcomed the decision of the Government of Kenya to increase its contributions to UN-Habitat and invited other countries to follow suit.

50. Two representatives said that they would be unable to maintain their level of financial support for the Programme unless its donor base were broadened and reforms implemented. In particular, they urged UN-Habitat swiftly to implement the recent recommendations of the Office of Internal Oversight Services, not least those concerning performance evaluation (which one said was being accorded unacceptably low priority), results-based management, collaboration with United Nations system bodies and enhanced transparency and accountability.

51. One representative encouraged UN-Habitat to further the reforms ensuing from the establishment of an independent evaluation unit in 2012 and the adoption of an evaluation policy in 2013, including at the regional and national levels, and to use the information gathered through project monitoring and evaluation to better inform its programmes and strategies. He also called upon UN-Habitat to develop a strategy to manage risks associated with its work in remote areas and with the use of consultants, and commended the progress achieved since 2013 towards becoming a more efficient and effective entity. A few representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, called for an increased regional presence of UN-Habitat to help countries to develop sustainable, just and socially inclusive human settlements.

52. Expressing the view that Habitat III would afford a unique opportunity for all stakeholders to share lessons, experiences and best practice, several representatives, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, called upon donors to contribute to the Habitat III trust fund to promote the participation of developing countries in the Conference and its preparatory process.

B. Dialogue on the special theme for the twenty-fifth session

53. At its 5th and 6th plenary meetings, on Tuesday, 21 April 2015, the Governing Council held a dialogue on the special theme for the session under agenda item 6. The dialogue consisted of a keynote speech and a discussion session in the morning, followed by a discussion session and a closing session in the afternoon. The discussion sessions featured a moderator and a panel of speakers, presentations by the panellists, comments from the floor and reactions from the panellists. A summary of the dialogue is set forth in annex [ ] to the present proceedings.

IV. Provisional agenda and other arrangements for the twenty-sixth session of the Governing Council (agenda item 8)

54. [*To be completed*]

V. Amendment to the rules of procedure of the Governing Council (agenda item 9)

55. [*To be completed*]

VI. Other matters (agenda item 10)

56. [*To be completed*]

VII. Adoption of the report of the session (agenda item 11)

57. [*To be completed*]

VIII. Closure of the session (agenda item 12)

58. [*To be completed*]

Annex [ ]

Message from the Secretary-General to the Governing Council of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme at its twenty-fifth session

I am pleased to send greetings to the twenty-fifth session of the UN-Habitat Governing Council. This session is taking place at a time when the relationship between urbanization and sustainable development is better understood and appreciated.

Our struggle for global sustainability will be won or lost in cities. The potential of urbanization to lift millions of people from poverty and to accelerate economic growth is huge, as demonstrated in recent decades by some of the major emerging economies.

Ensuring that urbanization contributes effectively to sustainable development involves addressing a number of major challenges. These include inadequate urban planning and weak legal frameworks; low levels of employment, especially among young people; and inadequate access to basic services for the rapidly increasing urban population, especially in Africa and Asia. In addition, the proliferation of slums and increasing informality in economic, housing and transport activities bring their own challenges. Other key barriers are the contribution of cities to global warming due to a combination of urban sprawl and the excessive dependence of urban settlements on cars and fossil fuels. Increasing urban inequalities and discriminatory practices against women and marginalized groups must also be overcome if we are to achieve sustainable development over the longer term.

As member States, you have recognized these opportunities and challenges during your consultations on the post-2015 sustainable development agenda. Urbanization has assumed an important position in the global discourse on sustainable development. I commend your work in proposing sustainable development goal 11, which is dedicated to making cities and human settlements "inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable" for all.

This session of the Governing Council is the last before three highly anticipated and potentially momentous agreements: the adoption of the sustainable development goals, in September; the climate change agreement, in Paris, in December; and the New Urban Agenda to be adopted at the end of the Habitat III conference in October 2016. Your deliberations can provide further guidance to these processes and the broader subject of sustainable urbanization and human settlements. So I am encouraged that the theme of your current session, "The contribution of UN-Habitat to the post-2015 development agenda: promoting sustainable urban development and human settlements", strongly reflects this ambition to make the necessary change that the world needs.

Please accept my best wishes for a successful Governing Council.